

LIFE AND HUMAN NATURE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

HUMAN nature is a subject that is studied by everyone. It provides a philosopher with material for the curious speculations of psychology : but it is not less interesting to the crossing-sweeper whose livelihood depends upon the disposition of the passers-by. It may be vulgar to gossip : it may be wrong to talk scandal : but they have charms that can hardly be resisted : and to many persons newspapers would be very dull reading were it not for their personal paragraphs. Human nature is the most attractive and the most exciting element in politics : it is the source from which dramatists, poets, and novelists draw nine-tenths of their inspiration : painting and sculpture are generally devoted to its illustration, and even so abstract an art as music is in great measure content to express the phases of human emotion. Nor need we marvel that human nature should be so engrossing a study. Our happiness is conditioned by the way in which others behave towards us. We win success in life by our ability to read and to influence the character of others. And, apart from these practical interests, human nature attracts our regard by a particular fascination. It is so extraordinarily variable, it abounds in such

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